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ABSTRACT

Problems in measuring the attitudes of whites toward blacks have included: (1) Lack of contemporary content in existing measures; (2) Difficulty of determining scale validity; and, (3) The strong social reinforcement for being "tolerant" toward blacks making the assessment of "true" racial attitudes more difficult. The Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) was developed to reduce or eliminate these problems. The SAS consists of 100 semantic differential items that relate to one of ten social or personal situations. Two forms of the SAS were developed. Each contains the same situations, items, and instructions except that the word "black" was inserted into the situations in Form B. When the SAS is administered to white subjects randomly assigned either form, more negative responses occur to Form B. This indicates that whites have generally negative attitudes toward blacks. This result has been obtained on several independent samples including the one employed in this study. The SAS methodology has been extended to cross-cultural comparisons and it has been found that white Danes tended to view "Mediterranean foreign workers" much as white Americans view blacks. It was suggested that the SAS methodolgy could be extended to many situations in attitude measurement where the investigation wishes to examine the experimental effects of one or more variables. (Author/JM)

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William E. Sedlacek, Glenwood C. Brooks, Jr.
and Ernest A. Chapples

Research Report # 11-71

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SUMMARY

Problems in measuring the attitudes of whites toward blacks have included: (1) Lack of contemporary content in existing measures, (2) Difficulty of determining scale validity, (3) The strong social reinforcement for being "tolerant" toward blacks makes assessing "true" racial attitudes more difficult. The Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) was developed to reduce or eliminate these problems. The SAS consists of 100 semantic differential items that relate to one of 10 social or personal situations. Two forms of the SAS were developed. Each contains the same situations, items and instructions except the word "black" was inserted into the situations in Form B. When the SAS is administered to white subjects randomly assigned either form, more negative responses occur to Form B. This indicates that whites have generally negative attitudes toward blacks. This result has been obtained on several independent samples including the one employed in this study. The SAS methodology has been extended to cross-cultural comparisons and it has been found that white Danes tended to view "Mediterranean foreign workers" much as white Americans view blacks. It was suggested that the SAS methodology could be extended to many situations in attitude measurement where the investigator wishes to examine the experimental effects of one or more variables.

The assessment of the attitudes of one race toward another appears crucial in a better understanding of race relations.

While there has been previous work in assessing attitudes of whites toward "Negroes" there have been some problems that make these scales inappropriate or difficult to use with current university students. One problem stems from rapid societal changes. Attitudinal measures must be kept contemporary to be useful. For instance, the item content used in earlier measures appears inappropriate today for measuring racial attitudes of the public in general. Even relatively recent scales[1] lack obvious contemporary referents such as "black" rather than "Negro."

Secondly, evidence for the validity of previous scales has been difficult to obtain and has generally been content validity, congruent validity against other measures, or concurrent validity against known groups. Content validity is subjective, and congruent validity raises the problem of an infinite regress with no ultimate standard of validity. That is, measure A is checked against B, B against C., etc., but no measure is validated against some external behavioral criterion. The demonstration of concurrent validity against known groups (e.g., prejudiced vs non-prejudiced) is a function of one's ability to identify and differentiate criterion groups adequately. The identification of known criterion groups presents many difficulties and has not been adequately accomplished to date. One difficulty noted by Zavallone and Cook[2] is that *S*s who hold generally favorable attitudes use both extremes of the response continuum, whereas *S*s who hold generally unfavorable attitudes tend not to use the positive end of continuum. Such differential response patterns make it difficult to isolate criterion groups. In addition, it is tautological to identify first a "so-called" prejudiced person and then build an attitude inventory to confirm the observation. Also, the problems of societal change noted above require a constant revalidation of any scale.

A third problem is that current measurement of whites' attitudes toward blacks is made more difficult because of the social reinforcement for being "tolerant" or positive toward blacks. It appears less socially acceptable to verbalize or admit to oneself one's own prejudices than it has been previously.[3]

Sedlacek and Brooks[4] did a series of studies using the more recent measure of whites' attitudes toward Negroes by Rokeach, Smith, and Evans.[5] Rokeach *et al.* hypothesized that friendship selection is based on similarity and dissimilarity of beliefs rather than race. Prejudice, they indicated, is largely a result of belief congruence and not racial prejudice. Results showed that: (1) despite the permutation of blacks and whites identified with certain beliefs, the purpose of the measurement was obvious to most *S*s; (2) many *S*s psychologically withdrew from the questionnaire (by their own report) and intentionally ignored the racial variable; (3) beliefs out of context fostered the lack of attention paid to race. That is, if the belief being paired with race is remote from any racial context, it allows *S* to easily ignore race in responding. Thus, *S* reacts to race, but in such a way as to yield no differentiation in his racial attitude toward blacks and whites. Intensity of belief and appropriateness of belief to *S* did not alter the withdrawal problem. For example, when nonracial beliefs were substituted for some of Rokeach's original beliefs, *S*s also ignored the racial component in the item. The methodological problem noted earlier, that of a social and personal set to keep one's "real" attitudes to oneself and ignore any racial reference, was clearly indicated. The outcome of the work of Rokeach and his colleagues could be interpreted as resulting from providing *S*s the choice of a highly emotionally bound alternative (race) and a more rational ego-defendable choice (belief in an issue). *S*s then tend to run for psychological cover and choose the belief. It appears, then, that an appropriate measure of racial attitudes would be subtle and provide a racial context to make the psychological withdrawal from the measure more difficult.

Sedlacek and Brooks[6] developed the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) to reduce or eliminate the methodological problems cited above.

METHOD

The Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) was developed to measure the attitudes of whites toward blacks. To provide a racial context and make psychological withdrawal difficult, 10 personal and social situations, with some relevance to a racial response, were created (see Table 1).

The situations represented instances where race was a variable in reactions to the situation. For each situation, 10 bipolar semantic differential scales were written,[7] making a total of 100 items in the SAS (see Table 2). Two forms of the SAS were developed. Each contains the same situations, bipolar scales and instructions except that the word "black" was inserted into each situation in Form B (see Table 1). The positive pole for each item was varied randomly from right to left to avoid response set.

Sedlacek and Brooks[8] administered the SAS to 365 white university students. Questionnaires were passed out randomly so each student had an approximately equal chance to receive Form A or B. *S*s had no knowledge that different forms existed.

The validity of the SAS was determined by the mean response differences between Form A and Form B, using a two-tailed t test at the .05 level. Since *S*s were assigned randomly to Form A or Form B and the forms were identical except for the insertion of the word "black" in Form B, any significant mean differences must be attributed to the word "black."

The purpose of the current study was to demonstrate the results of the SAS on an independent sample and discuss the implications of the method for other areas of attitude research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using the same methodology as Sedlacek and Brooks[8] Table 2 shows the results of an administration of the SAS to 319 white students at the University of Maryland. A total of 38 items were significant at .05 using *t*. The results closely parallel those from Sedlacek and Brooks[9] in that attitudes toward blacks were negative in all situations except III (magazine salesman) and VI (policeman). While whites actually felt more positive toward blacks in situations III and VI than they did when there was no reference to race, Sedlacek and Brooks felt that the two situations involved more socially distant service roles and that whites viewed these as appropriate for blacks. Thus a quote from a hypothetical modal subject from the study illustrates the findings "It's O.K. for blacks to sell me magazines or be policemen, but they had better not move next door or get engaged to any of my friends."

The method of attitude measurement presented here has also been extended to cross-cultural comparisons. For instance, it has been found that white Danes tended to view "Mediterranean foreign workers" much as white Americans viewed blacks in studies employing the SAS methodology.[10] Thus several methodological points generated by the SAS research seem worth generalizing. First, it is possible to make experimentally based cause-effect statements using relatively simple measurement techniques. Since so much of attitude and opinion measurement remains at a descriptive level this point seems particularly important. Additionally, the SAS methodology allows for easy, immediate norming of results against a comparable reference group. This aspect is also useful for cross-cultural or between group comparisons. Additionally, the possibilities exist within analysis of variance techniques to manipulate several variables concurrently and to assess interactions.

What then are some other areas where the technique might be applied? Many possibilities occur to the present writers. For instance one may assess the

so-called "credibility gap" by attributing the same political or social statements to various political figures, or by comparing a statement attributed to a political figure with an anonymous statement. Results could say a great deal about the importance of source and context in measuring opinions. Obviously we can manipulate many other variables such as sex, political party, age, geographical area, etc., individually or in combination to answer particular questions.

Aside from using the method in final study results, it should be quite useful in pilot or preliminary studies. For example researchers often have the problem of choosing the most appropriate wording of their items or questions. Comparing the results of specific wording changes could help reduce or eliminate item bias. For instance we may want to avoid a term not pertinent to a study which yields different results in different parts of the country. Other examples might be, does it make a difference if we say the "war in Indochina" rather than the "war in Vietnam" or the "Nixon administration" rather than the "current administration." Pretested items and questions can result in considerably improved opinion measurement.

In summary, it appears the method discussed above should be useful to a number of researchers in a wide range of settings. The possibilities are limited only by the boundaries of imagination contained in us all.

NOTES

1. M. Rokeach, P. Smith, and R. Evans, "Two Kinds of Prejudice or One?" In M. Rokeach (Ed.), *The Open and Closed Mind*, N.Y., Basic Books, 1960, pp. 132-168.

2. M. Zavallone, and S. W. Cook, "Influence of Judge's Attitudes on Ratings of Favorableness of Statements about a Social Group," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 1, 1965, pp. 43-54.

3. W. E. Sedlacek, and G. C. Brooks, Jr., "Social Acceptability in the Measurement of Racial Attitudes," *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 29, 1971, pp. 17-18.

4. W. E. Sedlacek, and G. C. Brooks, Jr., "Measuring Racial Attitudes in a Situational Context," *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 27, 1970, pp. 971-980.

5. Rokeach, Smith and Evans, *op.cit.*

6. Sedlacek and Brooks, *op.cit.*, "Measuring Racial Attitudes in a Situational Context."

7. C. E. Osgood, G. J. Suci, and P. H. Tannenbaum, *The Measurement of Meaning*, Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1957.

8. Sedlacek and Brooks, *op.cit.*, "Measuring Racial Attitudes in a Situational Context."

9. *Ibid.* They found 55 items significant using t at .05.

10. E. A. Chaples, W. E. Sedlacek, and G. C. Brooks, Jr., "Measuring Prejudicial Attitudes in a Situational Context: A Report on a Danish Experiment," *Scandinavian Political Studies* (in press).

TABLE 1

Instructions and Situations from the Situational Attitude Scale*

INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire measures how people think and feel about a number of social and personal incidents and situations. It is not a test so there are no right or wrong answers. The questionnaire is anonymous so please DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME.

Each item or situation is followed by 10 descriptive word scales. Your task is to select, for each descriptive scale, the rating which best describes YOUR feelings toward the item.

Sample item: Going out on a date

happy ' A ' B ' C ' D ' E ' sad

You would indicate the direction and extent of your feelings (e.g., you might select B) by indicating your choice (B) on your response sheet by blackening in the appropriate space for that word scale. DO NOT MARK ON THE BOOKLET. PLEASE RESPOND TO ALL WORD SCALES.

Sometimes you may feel as though you had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case, so DO NOT LOOK BACK AND FORTH through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. MAKE EACH ITEM A SEPARATE AND INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT. Respond as honestly as possible without puzzling over individual items. Respond with your first impressions whenever possible.

SITUATIONS

	FORM A	FORM B
I.	A new family moves in next door to you.	A new black family moves in next door to you.
II.	You read in the paper that a man has raped a woman.	You read in the paper that a black man has raped a white woman.
III.	It is evening and a man appears at your door saying he is selling magazines.	It is evening and a black man appears at your door saying he is selling magazines.
IV.	You are walking down the street alone and must pass a corner where a group of five young men are loitering.	You are walking down the street alone and must pass a corner where a group of five your black men are loitering.
V.	Your best friend has just become engaged.	Your best friend has just become engaged to a black person.
VI.	You are stopped for speeding by a policeman.	You are stopped for speeding by a black policeman.
VII.	A new person joins your social group.	A new black person joins your social group.
VIII.	You see a youngster steal something in a dimestore.	You see a black youngster steal something in a dimestore.
IX.	Some students on campus stage a demonstration.	Some black students on campus stage a demonstration.
X.	You get on a bus and you are the only person who has to stand.	You get on a bus that has all black people aboard and you are the only person who has to stand.

*The Situational Attitude Scale is copyrighted and available from the authors on request.

TABLE 2

Means, Standard Deviations and *t* Tests for Forms A and B[a]

ITEM NO.	*SITUATIONS[b] BIPOLAR ADJECTIVE DIMENSION*	*FORM A(N=158) MEAN*	*S.D.*	*FORM B(N=161) MEAN*	*S.D.*	*t*[c]
	I. NEW FAMILY NEXT DOOR					
1	good-bad	1.11	0.94	1.51	1.01	3.60
2	safe-unsafe	1.15	0.96	1.11	1.02	0.30
3	angry-not angry	3.45	1.06	3.35	1.04	0.81
4	friendly-unfriendly	0.78	0.84	0.84	0.91	0.54
5	sympathetic-not sympathetic	1.50	1.19	1.75	1.24	1.80
6	nervous-calm	2.63	1.26	2.81	1.21	1.35
7	happy-sad	1.37	0.90	1.69	1.00	2.95
8	objectionable-acceptable	3.11	1.02	3.08	1.21	0.26
9	desirable-undesirable	1.42	0.92	1.71	1.11	2.47
10	suspicious-trusting	2.62	1.06	2.63	1.17	0.06
	II. MAN RAPED WOMAN					
11	affection-disgust	3.45	0.79	3.50	0.86	0.51
12	relish-repulsion	3.42	0.82	3.42	0.85	0.08
13	happy-sad	3.44	0.82	3.52	0.81	0.86
14	friendly-hostile	3.06	0.93	3.01	0.91	0.49
15	uninvolved-involved	1.82	1.39	1.76	1.30	0.39
16	hope-hopelessness	2.25	1.20	2.17	1.16	0.60
17	aloof-outraged	2.40	1.03	2.41	1.02	0.10
18	injure-kill	1.35	1.14	1.37	1.18	0.19
19	safe-fearful	2.27	1.30	2.27	1.08	0.01
20	empathetic-can't understand	2.22	1.28	2.22	1.26	0.02
	III. MAN SELLING MAGAZINES					
21	relaxed-startled	2.00	1.19	1.69	1.25	2.27
22	receptive-cautious	2.89	1.05	2.30	1.31	4.45
23	excited-unexcited	2.84	1.20	2.63	1.06	1.59
24	glad-angered	2.35	0.68	1.99	0.63	4.88
25	pleased-annoyed	2.70	0.88	2.38	0.98	3.09
26	indifferent-suspicious	2.06	1.34	1.81	1.41	1.61
27	tolerable-intolerable	1.72	1.10	1.12	1.15	4.68
28	afraid-secure	2.08	1.12	2.36	1.14	2.24
29	friend-enemy	1.97	0.79	1.55	0.95	4.29
30	unprotected-protected	2.52	1.07	2.47	1.09	0.39
	IV. CORNER OF LOITERING MEN					
31	relaxed-tensed	3.11	1.12	3.14	1.09	0.18
32	pleased-angered	2.27	0.73	2.19	0.72	1.05
33	superior-inferior	2.18	1.11	2.04	0.90	1.29
34	smarter-dumber	1.41	0.92	1.51	0.74	1.04
35	whiter-blacker	1.80	0.84	1.12	1.00	6.54
36	aggressive-passive	2.74	1.10	2.75	1.03	0.09
37	safe-unsafe	2.66	1.04	2.66	1.13	0.05
38	friendly-unfriendly	2.23	1.07	1.91	1.10	3.40
39	excited-unexcited	1.84	1.17	1.81	1.09	0.17
40	trivial-important	1.85	1.17	1.84	1.19	0.07

[a] Scale A to E (numerical equivalent, 0 to 4)
[b] See Table 1 for complete situation.
[c] All *t* values larger than 1.97 are significant beyond .05 (2-tailed test).

TABLE 2

Means, Standard Deviations and *t* Tests for Forms A and B[a]
(Continued)

ITEM NO.	*SITUATIONS*[b] *BIPOLAR ADJECTIVE DIMENSION*	*FORM A(N=158) MEAN*	*S.D.*	*FORM B(N=161) MEAN*	*S.D.*	*t*[c]
	V. FRIEND BECOMES ENGAGED					
41	aggressive-passive	1.66	1.31	2.65	1.21	7.01
42	happy-sad	0.70	1.07	1.43	1.33	5.40
43	tolerable-intolerable	0.52	0.79	0.83	1.18	2.77
44	complimented-insulted	1.09	0.99	1.68	1.02	5.21
45	angered-overjoyed	3.09	0.88	2.38	1.05	6.60
46	secure-fearful	1.27	1.16	1.26	1.22	0.08
47	hopeful-hopeless	0.75	0.95	1.12	1.30	2.85
48	excited-unexcited	0.73	0.90	1.43	1.16	6.05
49	right-wrong	1.13	1.08	1.43	1.31	2.24
50	disgusting-pleasing	3.25	0.97	2.53	1.22	5.80
	VI. STOPPED BY POLICEMAN					
51	calm-nervous	3.18	1.20	2.13	1.63	6.49
52	trusting-suspicious	2.18	1.27	0.94	1.11	9.23
53	afraid-safe	1.47	1.31	2.91	1.40	9.38
54	friendly-unfriendly	1.39	1.23	0.91	1.17	3.56
55	tolerant-intolerant	1.18	1.22	0.65	1.07	4.18
56	bitter-pleasant	2.16	1.20	2.61	1.28	3.20
57	cooperative-uncooperative	0.57	0.95	2.79	0.80	1.94
58	acceptive-belligerent	1.01	1.04	0.68	1.05	2.81
59	inferior-superior	1.68	1.02	1.76	0.79	0.73
60	smarter-dumber	1.96	0.96	1.91	0.78	0.50
	VII. PERSON JOINS SOCIAL GROUP					
61	warm-cold	0.85	0.86	0.88	1.01	0.32
62	sad-happy	2.98	0.85	2.89	1.00	0.89
63	superior-inferior	1.59	0.74	1.84	0.51	3.54
64	threatened-neutral	3.08	1.13	3.62	0.56	4.79
65	pleased-displeased	1.01	0.88	1.16	1.04	1.37
66	understanding-indifferent	1.03	1.07	1.07	1.31	0.32
67	suspicious-trusting	2.68	0.97	3.06	1.02	3.39
68	disappointed-elated	2.53	0.75	2.37	0.91	1.69
69	favorable-unfavorable	0.96	0.89	1.01	1.10	0.51
70	uncomfortable-comfortable	2.75	1.01	2.99	1.14	1.98
	VIII. YOUNGSTER STEALS					
71	surprising-not surprising	2.32	1.54	2.50	1.26	1.14
72	sad-happy	0.76	0.87	0.79	0.96	0.28
73	disinterested-interested	2.77	1.28	2.45	1.33	2.13
74	close-distant	1.71	1.22	2.15	1.29	3.11
75	understandable-baffling	1.66	1.31	1.25	1.19	2.97
76	responsible-not responsible	2.35	1.25	2.44	1.36	0.63
77	concerned-unconcerned	1.01	1.17	1.27	1.32	1.81
78	sympathy-indifference	1.37	1.21	1.61	1.35	1.67
79	expected-unexpected	2.02	1.20	1.83	1.06	1.47
80	hopeful-hopeless	1.61	1.12	1.65	1.10	0.26

[a] Scale A to E (numerical equivalent, 0 to 4)
[b] See Table 1 for complete situation.
[c] All *t* values larger than 1.97 are significant beyond .05 (2-tailed test).

TABLE 2

Means, Standard Deviations and *t* Tests for Forms A and B[a]
(Continued)

ITEM NO.	*SITUATIONS[b] BIPOLAR ADJECTIVE DIMENSION*	*FORM A(N=158) MEAN*	*S.D.*	*FORM B(N=161) MEAN*	*S.D.*	*t*[c]
	IX. CAMPUS DEMONSTRATION					
81	bad-good	2.34	1.15	2.12	1.39	1.47
82	understanding-indifferent	1.17	1.11	1.41	1.30	1.76
83	suspicious-trusting	1.86	1.07	1.83	1.09	0.29
84	safe-unsafe	2.03	1.23	2.19	1.20	1.23
85	disturbed-undisturbed	1.84	1.29	1.56	1.28	1.91
86	justified-unjustified	1.56	1.05	1.48	1.16	1.58
87	tense-calm	1.72	1.15	1.65	1.18	0.48
88	hate-love	2.18	0.87	2.09	0.92	0.84
89	wrong-right	2.23	1.09	2.25	1.21	0.16
90	humorous-serious	2.99	1.06	3.30	0.90	2.83
	X. ONLY PERSON STANDING					
91	fearful-secure	2.56	1.10	2.05	1.32	3.76
92	tolerable-intolerable	1.18	1.22	0.92	1.11	2.02
93	hostile-indifferent	3.01	1.08	2.95	1.12	0.44
94	important-trivial	3.00	1.16	3.02	1.21	0.14
95	conspicuous-inconspicuous	1.14	1.18	1.24	1.34	0.68
96	calm-anxious	1.65	1.35	1.78	1.44	0.79
97	indignant-understanding	2.84	1.10	2.80	1.09	0.38
98	comfortable-uncomfortable	2.45	1.26	2.39	1.35	0.52
99	hate-love	2.16	0.75	2.16	0.86	0.03
100	not resentful-resentful	1.23	1.26	0.99	1.24	1.71

[a] Scale A to E (numerical equivalent, 0 to 4)
[b] See Table 1 for complete situation.
[c] All *t* values larger than 1.97 are significant beyond .05 (2-tailed test).